

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2935

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 1859

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UN, AG

SUBJECT: SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION: STATUS OF FONMIN BOUTEFLIKA

1. FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTEFLIKA IS SCHEDULED TO LEAVE ALGIERS TODAY FOR NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE AT LIMA, FOLLOWING WHICH HE WILL GO TO NEW YORK TO PRESIDE OVER SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION. WE ARE INFORMED THAT MOST OF OFFICE DIRECTORS OF FOREIGN MINISTRY HAVE BEEN WORKING FOR TWO WEEKS ON SPEECHES HE IS TO GIVE AT LIMA AND NEW YORK, AND WE CAN BE SURE HE WILL HAVE SOMETHING NOXIOUS TO SAY.

2. BOUTEFLIKA LEAVES IN PERENNIAL CLOUD OF RUMORS THAT HE IS ON THE SKIDS. AMONG PHENOMENA ADDUCED TO SUPPORT THEM THIS YEAR ARE:

(A) HIS FAILURE TO APPEAR TO GREET ARRIVING DIGNITARIES (THE LAST OCCASION WE CAN RECALL HIS DOING SO WAS THE ARRIVAL OF AUSTRIAN CHANCELLOR KREISKY LAST FEBRUARY). THIS INCLUDES PEOPLE WHO THOUGHT THEY WERE HIS GOOD FRIENDS, LIKE INDIAN FOREIGN SECRETARY, OR PEOPLE WITH WHOM HE WOULD PRESUMABLY LIKE TO ESTABLISH CLOSE WORKING RELATIONS FOR PRAGMATIC REASONS, SUCH AS PERUVIAN FOREIGN MINISTER, WHO WILL BE RECEIVING BOUTEFLIKA

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AT LIMA.

(B) FACT THAT INCREASINGLY BOUMEDIENE IS RUNNING FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND BOUTEFLIKA IS IN BACK SEAT. THIS CANNOT BE VERY COMFORTABLE SITUATION FOR HIM.

(C) FACT THAT REGIME PUT NO WEIGHT BEHIND HIS REQUEST FOR AN INVITATION TO HELSINKI. IF BOUMEDIENE HAD WANTED HIM TO GO HE COULD VERY EASILY HAVE CONVEYED MESSAGE TO US. THIS WAS NOT DONE.

(D) FACT THAT HE DID NOT ATTEND ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING AT JIDDA OR OAU SUMMIT AT KAMPALA, BOTH IMPORTANT FOR ALGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY.

(E) RECURRENT RUMORS THAT BOUTEFLIKA IS TIRED, SICK, DISCOURAGED, INSECURE, AND LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT.

3. ALL OF THIS MAY MEAN NOTHING. BOUTEFLIKA'S BEHAVIOR HAS ALWAYS BEEN A LITTLE BIZARRE AND HE HAS TRADITIONALLY AVOIDED CEREMONIAL OCCASIONS WHENEVER HE COULD. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HE IS LOSING (OR HAS LOST) HIS INFLUENCE WITH BOUMEDIENE AND LATTER WOULD LIKE TO EASE HIM OUT, BUT WE CANNOT PROVE IT AND BELIEVE RUMORS SHOULD BE TREATED WITH RESERVE. WOULD APPRECIATE USUN KEEPING THEM IN MIND, HOWEVER, AND REPORTING ANY INDICATIONS POINTING ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.PARKER

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